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STATE FOR WHA/CAR

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SUBJECT: PM INGRAHAM CALLS PETROCARIBE A "STUPID PROPOSAL"

REF: 07 NASSAU 939

Classified By: DCM Zuniga-Brown for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (U) At a meet the press⁸ event on November 30 Prime Minister Ingraham called signing onto the PetroCaribe accord with Venezuela a stupid proposal.⁸ The PM stated the opposition PLP nearly signed onto Petrocaribe last year without fully understanding the ramifications the proposal would have on The Bahamas. Ex-Foreign Minister, PLP Foreign Affairs spokesman, and opposition member of Parliament Fred Mitchell rebutted the PM's remarks, saying PetroCaribe could benefit the Bahamian people. Former Trade Minister Leslie Miller, the gadfly PLP activist and main promoter of Venezuela's PetroCaribe initiative in The Bahamas, insisted PetroCaribe could be beneficial to The Bahamas. Miller stated the current administration is catering to Washington and the rift between the U.S. and Chavez.⁸

12. (C) Comment: The Bahamas has a wholly privatized oil distribution system that is incompatible with PetroCaribe. Further, both FNM and PLP senior leadership are leery about being beholden to Venezuela. PM Ingraham's administration has never been interested in Petrocaribe (reftel) and claims it is looking towards alternative energy sources rather than proposals such as PetroCaribe. End comment.

SIEGEL